

09-22-2018 Update - Museu Nacional do Brasil - English

Dear colleagues,

I continue to be in constant communication with my colleagues in Brazil and staff of the conservation laboratory at the National Museum of Brazil.

The UFRJ (Federal University of RJ) received emergency funds to protect the Museum. Plywood boards were placed on windows and doors. There is also extra security in the perimeter of the building. The conservation lab is sorting a few pieces that were blown away from the Museum during the fire, such as pieces of thesis and other small objects brought to them by the neighbors of the Museum. They have not been allowed into the building. Most of the structure is still very fragile and according to conservation staff "*pieces of internal wall continue to fall, we can hear it*". It is evident that the highest priority and challenge at the moment is to try to secure inner walls, as well as try to cover the building. Spring Season just started in Rio de Janeiro and it will bring more rain, humidity, heat and consequently risk of mold.

Another challenge is currently to place over 1,000 people in adjacent buildings, sharing computers, desks and working spaces. The comradery is absolutely touching. This also means that there is no space at the moment to accommodate any type of preservation supply that institutions in Brasil and around the world are willing to donate.

In the meantime, colleagues from the Museum are reaching out nationally and internationally to get guidance on how to handle & treat an immense variety of media support and objects of all formats and periods covered with soot, debris, water and possible mold. I have been compiling and sharing with them the suggestions, publications and other information received in this matter. There is a lot of great information been shared in many ways. THANK YOU!

They are drafting an extensive recovery protocol of the pieces they might find once experts can enter the inner part of the building. It includes staff training, assessment, triage, inventory, documentation, housing, packing and transport to other storage areas, among other things. It also includes interviews with curators and delimitation of areas of responsibility and access to the various parts of the building during recovery.

It is by far the most complex situation experienced by my colleagues in Brazil, with multiple jurisdictions and types of expertise involved. Nevertheless, Brazilian conservators, in especial the conservation team of the Museu Nacional is demonstration an inspiring determination to get things done safely and properly to keep the soul of the Museum alive.

With that in mind, I want to share with you something I received just yesterday. It is a cartoon telling the story of the pieces that might have been lost during the fire. They are being helped by other "dead" collection items to get to the cemetery and talk to Death in the "after life". Though it is in Portuguese, I think that you can get the idea of what is going on. In the last drawing, Death saying that people could ask her what was happening at the cemetery, and she would say: "we lost 200 years of history"; however, seeing all what the entire team of "dead" collection items have done to bring their colleagues to the cemetery, Death concludes that "The soul of the Museum continues, because history never dies, if we keep it alive".

A nice tribute to the *Museu Nacional of Brasil* and all efforts to save our history and the world's history.

I am leaving later this week to Guatemala to manage and teach at the 2nd APOYOnline Conference for Preservation of Cultural Heritage which will take place in La Antigua. The theme of the conference is: "***Managing Emergencies in Cultural Heritage: Sharing Experiences and Strengthening Networks in the Americas***", with workshops in risk management and emergency preparedness, response and a drill. The theme could not be timely. It will certainly be a great opportunity to discuss past, current and future

actions in mitigating emergencies in the Americas with 90 participants coming from 19 countries. We will disseminate information during and after the conference at the APOYOnline webpage (www.apoyonline.org) and social media.

I will resume my updates about the national Museum of Brazil after the conference.

Best
Beatriz Haspo



More general information below:



The oldest in the country, *Museu Nacional do Brasil* was experiencing serious difficulties generated by budget cuts for its maintenance well before the disaster. Since 2014 the institution was not receiving the yearly fund of R\$ 520,000 (around US\$ 130,000) allocated to its maintenance and was showing visible signs of poor care, such as walls peeling off and exposed electric wiring. The institution was installed in an imperial palace and turned 200 years old last June. It was created by Don João VI in 1818. It housed more than 20 million items, has an academic and scientific profile with collections focused on paleontology, anthropology and biological ethnology. Less

than 1% of those were in exhibition.¹

¹ Folha de São Paulo Newspaper: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2018/09/mec-libera-r-85-mi-para-reconstrucao-do-museu-nacional-no-rio.shtml>

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After the fire that destroyed the National Museum in Rio, the government of Brazil issued two Presidential Decrees to deal with museums in the country. The first created the Brazilian Agency of Museums (*Agencia Brasileira de Museus* –the second created rules for new funds that will support the institutions. ABRAM replaces the IBRAM – Brazilian Institute of Museums – will be responsible for the rebuilding of the National Museum and will manage 27 other museums with an initial budget of around US\$ 50 million. This is more than twice what IBRAM has today as its budget.

Obs: “*Agencia Publica*” is a figure in the Brazilian law with autonomy to manage its budget, to go after new/more resources, has a compliance policy and clear indicators which allow for its periodical evaluation. It is a “creative solution” to public administration bureaucracy and its rigid rules.

In terms of the National Museum it was announced that it will continue to be part of the Federal University of Rio for research, teaching and extension programs – it is the reconstruction itself that will be under the new Agency. The second decree created the conditions for a new Fiduciary Fund to which private companies and donors can give money and establish how it is to be used in the cultural sector (education, health, science and technology sectors will also benefit from the new rules). Presently, any extra resource obtained by the museums goes to the central government coffers and usually are not allocated to the institution which raised it or find their way only after a long period of time.

The new Agency will be supervised by an Administrative Council composed by the Minister of Culture, 3 representatives from the Executive and 3 representatives of civil society.²

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The decree has generated a lot commotion and protests among professionals employed by UFRJ. Many of them not sure what the future brings in terms of administration of the museum and it is collections and the involvement of technical staff in research and preservation of what can be still recovered. Many Institutions and cultural experts issued their disagreement. Among them, the Brazilian Network of Universities Collections and Museums (RBCMU) issued a document criticizing the First Decree, which it says goes against the continuity of public policies in the museums sector, that resulted in the creation of the Museums Regulation and of the IBRAM itself. University museums are particularly important: there are 600 of them in the country, 16 under the UFRJ administration. They play a very relevant role in teaching, research and extension programs.³

ICOM Brasil says it is actively monitoring the changes in the environment of the museums sector, at the federal level. According to ICOM, the Executive Branch did not consult with the organizations of the sector in preparation of the Decrees. ICOM has previously though manifested its repulse to the extinction of IBAM due to its importance.⁴

In addition, UNESCO Representatives in Brazil, during a press conference, said the full reconstruction of the Museu Nacional, in Rio, could take up to 10 years. UNESCO’s emergency mission led by Cristina Menegazzi, of Italy, said that the contents of the museum could be recovered by third parties’ donations and the use of advanced technologies, such as 3D printing.⁵

² O Estado de Sao Paulo Newspaper: <https://nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbrasil.estadao.com.br%2Fnoticias%2Fgeral%2CGoverno-criara-a-agencia-brasileira-de-museus-e-estuda-retirar-da-ufri-gestao-do-mu%2C70002495757&data=02%7C01%7C%7C767f3ed5f3054c7cbb0708d6177cb5a5%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636722221713785479&sdata=VjZwFGkpvMVMIEHOMbk0n2EFGg5aGeJWoV00rUf4K5jg%3D&reserved=0>

³ <https://museu.ufg.br/n/109515-carta-aberta-em-apoio-a-ufri-ao-museu-nacional-e-ao-ibram>

⁴ <https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2F224695894558039%2Fposts%2F745437392483884%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C336dd159d324be003d008d6177fd86%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636722234732546465&sdata=zeRBF1QMswqgSUBw5brQAydu4Ktmwr3E8hAGJV719J0%3D&reserved=0>

⁵ DNoticias.pt and Porto (Portugal) https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pportodosmuseus.pt%2F2018%2F09%2F19%2Funesco-diz-que-recuperacao-do-museu-nacional-do-rio-de-janeiro-pode-demorar-10-anos%2F%3Futm_source%3Dfeedburner%26utm_medium%3Demail%26utm_campaign%3Dfeed%253A%2Bpportodosmuseus%2529&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cb211c26c4c5540b6272108d61ed8d191%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636730313903341737&sdata=VbyHDeuG43pxF8nRskqovLTCUfuw1%28kb9ua%2FPDv564k%3D&reserved=0